

ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR
ELECTORAL PROCESS

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit the following statement on the FY 2005 Funding of the Federal Election and Election Assistance Commission. As Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on House Administration, I am especially interested in the Appropriations Committee's funding recommendation for the Federal Election Commission, the Election Assistance Commission and programs implementing the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). While these commissions and the programs they administer comprise a very small portion of the federal budget, the process of electing federal officials is critical to the health of our democracy.

I am pleased that the committee provided full funding for the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The FEC administers campaign finance and presidential election laws, and in recent years it has received additional responsibilities.

Although the process has been contentious at times, I am happy to see that both sides of the committee came together and not only met the authorized funding of \$10 million for the EAC, but exceed it by \$5 million.

I recognize that the President's delay in appointing members to the EAC gave the commission a late start, but I remain hopeful that the EAC can regain lost time during the coming fiscal year. Given the 2000 Florida election debacle and widespread public interest in election procedures, we need to assure voters nationwide of the sanctity of their votes in the electronic age. In the coming year, I expect that the EAC will use this additional money to devote appropriate attention to standards and technology issues with the assistance of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

The EAC and its NIST partner must expedite the development of proper standards so the American people can realize the potential of HAVA, especially the election reform programs, which the Appropriations Committee also did not fund. The EAC must also establish the Help America Vote Foundation, as authorized by HAVA, so the foundation can help civic organizations encourage voter participation.

Implementing a new federal program like HAVA is often fraught with difficulty. In this case, however, there is not a moment to lose, for it is our democracy at risk. The Committee on House Administration looks forward to working with the FEC, the EAC, state election officials, and interest groups to ensure that federal election laws and programs achieve their important purpose.

Again, I would like to commend the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Transportation-Treasury subcommittee for including this critical funding for the EAC.

SUPPORT OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER
ASSISTANCE ACT

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Good Samaritan Volunteer Firefighter Assistance Act (H.R. 1787).

First, this bill would prohibit civil lawsuits from being brought against a person who donates fire-control or fire-rescue equipment to a volunteer fire company, under state or federal law, for personal, property damages or loss, or death caused by the equipment subsequent to the donation. But this prohibition against lawsuits would not apply in cases where the donor's actions constitute gross negligence, intentional misconduct, or where the person is the manufacturer of the fire-control or fire-rescue equipment.

Second, the bill would preempt state laws to the extent that those laws are inconsistent with the bill. But it would not preempt state law that provides additional protection from liability for an individual who donates firefighting equipment.

Finally, the bill would also require the U.S. Justice Department to review and report to Congress on donations of equipment made to volunteer firefighter companies in each state during the previous five-year period. Such report would include an analysis of the most effective way to fund firefighter companies for each state, whether first-responder funding is sufficient, and the best method to make sure donated equipment to volunteer companies is in usable condition.

This bill protects people, who out of the goodness of their own hearts, donate much-needed equipment to our brave firefighters who selflessly volunteer to defend our communities. We all know that there are many pressing and unmet needs among volunteer fire departments across the country. Yes, I was pleased to vote for the FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill when it passed the House last June and it provides \$32 billion to improve our nation's homeland security, including several billion for our firefighters and other first responders. We would like to have done more, but the dire fiscal condition of the federal budget precludes us from doing so.

It makes common sense to me that we then make certain that these so-called good Samaritans can make supplementary donations of equipment to help meet the needs of volunteer firefighters. This bill does that, while also safeguarding against shoddy donations that might jeopardize the lives of our volunteer firefighters and in our communities.

IN HONOR AND REMEMBRANCE OF
OFFICER TIMOTHY JACOB LAIRD

HON. JULIA CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of Officer Timothy Jacob Laird of Indianapolis, Indiana, who was tragically shot and killed on August

18, 2004 during an act of bravery in the line of duty.

Known as Jake to his friends, Timothy Laird was born on September 17, 1972 in Logansport, Indiana. At the age of 4, Jake already knew he wanted to be a police officer. He graduated from Warren Central High School in 1991 and enlisted in the Marine Corps, where he spent 8 years in service to his country. In 2000, he joined the Indianapolis Police Department in the 93rd Recruit Class, fulfilling his lifelong dream.

Jake Laird was a member of Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #86. He took part in the investigation of more than 600 incidents during his 4 years of service with the Indianapolis Police Department, earning two commendations.

On August 18th, Officer Laird responded to reports of a man shooting a machine gun in a southside neighborhood of Indianapolis. The suspect's indiscriminate shooting injured four officers, who were treated in area hospitals. Officer Laird was fatally wounded, becoming the 56th officer to die in the line of duty in the 150-year history of the Indianapolis Police Department. He was 31.

Officer Laird's bravery and sacrifice for the people of Indianapolis has touched the lives of his community. On August 23rd, hundreds of citizens, many of whom had never met Timothy Laird, lined up along the 20-mile funeral route in silent tribute. Over 1,000 police cars from all over Indiana, as well as Kentucky, Ohio, and Illinois, took part in the procession honoring his service. Police Chief Jerry Barker awarded him the Indianapolis Police Department's Medal of Honor posthumously, only the fourth time it had been given in 150 years.

I ask my colleagues to join me in extending my deepest condolences to his wife Jennifer and their beloved 7-year-old daughter Kaylee; his parents Deborah and Michael Laird and Timothy and Barb Althouse; his brothers Gaben Laird, Christopher Laird, Timothy Althouse, and Dan and Matt Wilhelm; his sisters Sarah Althouse and Heather Laird; and his grandparents Mrs. Howard Dodson and Donald and Rosemary McEldowney.

A United States veteran, beloved father, husband and family member, Jake Laird will be deeply missed. His strength and service to his country and community will be remembered always by all whom he inspired and loved.

The citizens of Indianapolis extend our heartfelt gratitude for his sacrifice and dedication to public service.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I was not present for votes on Monday, September 13, 2004.

Had I been here I would have voted "aye" on H. Con. Res. 363 expressing the grave concern of Congress regarding the continuing gross violations of human rights and civil liberties of the Syrian people by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I would have voted "aye" on H. Res. 667 expressing support for freedom in Hong Kong.

I would have voted "aye" on H. Res. 760 condemning the series of terrorist attacks